

CLAIMS:

1. A movable joint comprising:

a metal housing having side wall which defines a central bore having a closed end and an open end;

a metal lower bearing disposed within said central bore;

a movable member having a head end portion disposed in said central bore and a shank portion extending from said head end portion, the head end portion engaging said metal lower bearing in said central bore, said shank portion being at least partially disposed outside of said central bore;

an annular metal upper bearing disposed about said movable member within said central bore, said annular metal upper bearing having an inner surface engaging said head end portion, an outer surface engaging said side wall, and a split segment linking said inner surface with said outer surface;

an annular cover plate disposed about said movable member and secured within said central bore; and

a spring member compressed between said annular cover plate and an upper surface of said annular metal upper bearing.

2. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said metal housing further include an axial lubrication port disposed in said closed end of said central bore.

3. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said annular cover plate and said spring member are composed of metal.

4. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said spring member is configured to exert an axial preload force on said annular metal upper bearing towards said closed end of said central bore; and

wherein said annular metal upper bearing is configured to engage said side wall and said head portion simultaneously.

5. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said annular metal upper bearing is axially displaceable within said central bore.

6. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said metal lower bearing is retained with said central bore by an interference fit.

7. The movable joint of Claim 1 further including a dust boot restrictor disposed about said shank portion.

8. The movable joint of Claim 1 further including a flexible dust cover coupled between said housing and said shank portion of said movable member.

9. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said lower metal bearing includes at least one lubrication slot disposed on an inner bearing surface; and

wherein said annular metal upper bearing includes at least one lubrication slot disposed on an inner bearing surface.

10. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said housing includes a deformable annular region adjacent said open end of said central bore, said deformable annular region adapted for radially inward deformation to secure said annular cover plate within said central bore.

11. The movable joint of Claim 1 wherein said annular cover plate includes a chamfered inner surface, said chamfered inner surface configured to restrict articulation of said movable member.

12. A method of assembling a compression load joint, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a metal housing having a side wall which defines a central bore having a closed end and an open end;

inserting a metal lower bearing within said central bore;

providing a movable member having a head end portion disposed in said central bore and a shank portion extending from said head end portion, the head end portion engaging said metal lower bearing in said central bore, said shank portion being at least partially disposed outside of said central bore;

inserting an annular metal upper bearing within said central bore, about said movable member, said annular metal upper bearing having an inner surface engaging said head end portion, an outer surface engaging said side wall, and a split segment linking said inner surface with said outer surface;

disposing an annular spring member within said central bore, about said movable member, on an upper surface of said annular metal upper bearing;

disposing an annular cover plate within said central bore, about said movable member, adjacent said annular spring member; and

deforming a rim portion of the housing surrounding said open end radially inward into engagement with said cover plate to form an annular lip which overlies said cover plate, said deforming procedure axially displacing said cover plate and said annular

metal upper bearing within said central bore, and compressing said annular spring member to exert an axial load on said annular metal upper bearing.